

War Stories: Phyllis

written by Eugene L. Heyden, RN. | October 11, 2016



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By Eugene L. Heyden, RN

If you're going to come down with Crohn's, try to put it off as long as possible. Try to wait until you are at least in your mid- to late-fifties. I interviewed a lady who did just that. Her name is Phyllis. This is her story.

Phyllis, an elementary school teacher (no stress here!), was diagnosed with Crohn's on October 16, 2008. A colonoscopy made the diagnosis easy, and it also showed

her disease to be extensive and in a very advanced stage. Surprisingly, leading up to all this, Phyllis was not all that ill, or so she thought.

About five, perhaps eight years prior to diagnosis, Phyllis began having an occasional bout of diarrhea (like, who doesn't), sometimes a little bloody, but most of the time her stool was normal (if you can call diarrhea "normal"). And nothing during this period of time raised any red flags, as these episodes were self-limiting and infrequent . . . until they weren't.

In the weeks leading up to her decision to seek medical attention, her diarrhea increased in frequency and, shall we say, "accidents happen?" Well, you just can't go through life afraid of the next "accident," such as midway through your grocery shopping experience or right there in front of your highly impressionable students, so Phyllis decided it was time to find out what exactly was going on. Pain "daily" was also occurring, which undoubtedly gave the whole matter a certain sense of urgency. And now we're back to October 16, 2008.

Unmistakably, the colonoscopy revealed that Phyllis had Crohn's, and a severe case to boot. In view of the findings, the first order of business was a round of steroids—maybe *this* could calm things down? But it wasn't long before this course of action ended and ended abruptly. Approximately two weeks after starting steroid therapy, Phyllis broke out with a red, bumpy, painful rash all over her body. "Stop the steroids and see me in the office at the next available appointment," was the advice given to her by her physician. She took his advice.

In the meantime, while waiting for her follow-up doctor's appointment, Phyllis's husband began a search for answers. Somehow, he had stumbled across a website featuring **The Sherry Brescia's Diet**. To him, the diet looked promising. He shared this finding and his thoughts with his wife, and both concluded that following the diet was worth a shot.

So, it was agreed, "Let's buy the diet book. Let's give it a try!" And like a good patient, Phyllis shared her intention to follow this diet with her gastroenterologist. Surprisingly, he agreed! So, The Sherry Brescia's Diet was started in February of 2008. Within one month, and in her own words, "I was feeling great!" Pain "daily" was a thing of the past; an accident was exceedingly rare. Grocery shopping once

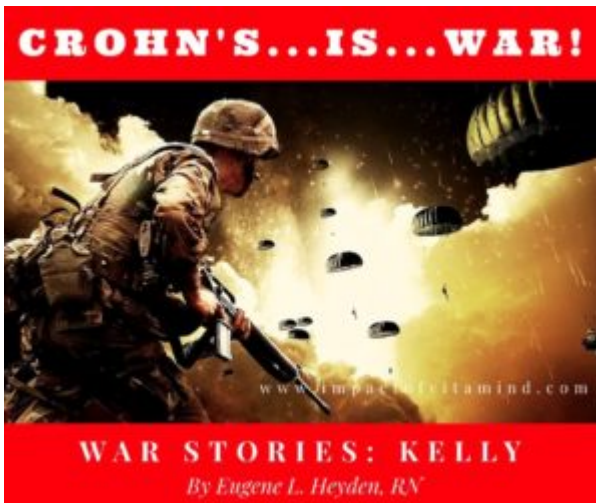
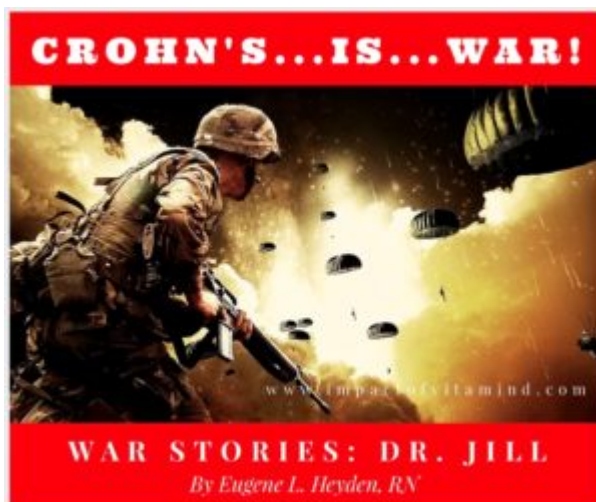
again became a delight! By the way, the diet in question is based on the premise that by careful food combining, you can decrease the complexity of digestion, decrease the acidity of the body, and, thereby, resolve not only diseases of the gut but other medical conditions as well. Sherry Brescia developed this diet after “curing” her irritable bowel syndrome by following a food-combining diet.

Last I checked, and following over seven years in remission, Phyllis continues to follow her version of The Sherry Brescia’s Diet—simply avoiding starches and protein foods during the same meal. And she rarely feels ill. If she strays too far from the diet, GI symptoms return, and her husband does all the grocery shopping (I made that up). Needless to say, she seldom strays. Way to go, Phyllis! And she did this all without the use of medications. This is quite the story, but there is more. Phyllis’s gastroenterologist was so impressed with her response to the diet that he suggested it to a few of his other patients who reportedly followed the diet and achieved similar results. But there is even more!

Approximately five years after receiving her Crohn’s diagnosis, Phyllis decided it was time for a follow-up colonoscopy. This time, it was performed by a new gastroenterologist (her previous gastroenterologist had moved on). Shortly after the procedure ended, the new gastroenterologist reported his findings: “Your colon is completely healthy! There are no signs that you ever had Crohn’s.” (Actually, after reviewing the images of the original colonoscopy, performed some five years earlier, he told Phyllis he had great difficulty in believing that this was the same colon he had just scoped.)

I learned a few things of relevance while interviewing Phyllis. She had been a vegetarian all her life, she was lactose intolerant and avoided milk, and later in life avoided wheat products—all factors that may have helped her over the years hold back full-blown Crohn’s. But clearly, it was The Sherry Brescia’s Diet that allowed Phyllis to achieve remission.

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